

**Even when we're apart, I'll still love you with
everything I have by TheMikeWheelers
(jasongracefully)**

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Summary:

The summer before leaving for college is the time to start discussing plans for the future.

Even when we're apart, I'll still love you with everything I have

Author's Note:

This is NOT a sequel, but this fic does work well with a fic I wrote last October, Graduation, and if you enjoy this fic you may enjoy that one as well.

<http://archiveofourown.org/works/8426308>

Beams of light shined down through the leaves, the sunshine hitting El like a breath of fresh air as she laid with her back against the grass.

She could feel as blades of grass tickled her ear as she turned on her side to face the boy beside her. Mike had his eyes closed as his face fell into a peaceful smile, a sight Eleven could drink in the image of all day.

It was Mike's idea to bring them on the picnic, one of the many spontaneous dates he'd been planning lately, showing up outside El's house to tell her he had a surprise. He brought her out to a small clearing in the woods they'd gone to hundreds of times for stargazing, and after they finished eating Mike laid back to look at the sky and trees above them, and El soon followed suit.

She couldn't help but notice how quiet Mike was being today, though it didn't really surprise her. He'd become much more quiet in general this summer, ever since he had graduated in June. He stopped being the talkative boy Eleven always knew, distancing himself from her and their friends, though he never opened up about what exactly was bothering him.

"Mike," El called for him, his eyes slowly opening as he tilted his head to face her.

"Yeah?"

"Is something going on?" She asked.

"No," He furrowed his eyebrows in response, "What do you mean?"

El sighed out slightly, going to wrap her arm around Mike's side, "I know something's bothering you. You know you can talk to me."

For a moment Mike looked like he was about to confess, words dancing on his lips but not quite being spoken, until he pulled away, his face melting into a smile, "Did you know I love you?" He started to lean in.

El smirked, though disappointed she couldn't get Mike to admit, "I love you too."

She finished her declaration right as Mike's lips hit hers, smiling into the kiss. Eleven kissed him back for a few seconds, her lips lingering on his for a moment until she reluctantly pulled away. Mike didn't move, his eyes slowly opening and staring at the ground, like he wasn't ready for the kiss to end.

"I love you."

"You said that already."

"No, El, I *really* love you," Mike looked up to meet her gaze, swallowing a gulp, "I love you so much. I don't know what I'm going to do without you."

El's smile dropped to the ground. So that's what was bothering Mike: college. She wasn't particularly keen on the idea of him leaving for so long, but ever since he had started filling out those applications last fall she had been trying her best to be supportive.

Mike continued, though all his words were practically a buzz to Eleven at that point, "I can't be away from you. I'm gonna miss you so much. I already miss you and I haven't even left yet."

El looked up, allowing herself to be vulnerable for a minute, "You're going to miss me?"

"What? Of course I am," Mike put his hand on Eleven's cheek, "You're my everything, El."

“I thought you didn't want me.”

Her words clawed into Mike's heart like nails shredding away his chest, bringing that ache he always felt when he had to see El upset, “What do you mean?”

“It's stupid.” El looked away.

“No it's not,” Mike tried to turn her face so she would look at him again, “Why wouldn't I want you?”

“I'm scared that when you leave Hawkins you're just going to leave me behind. That you're leaving 'cause you don't want me anymore.” El could feel her heart beating twice as fast, letting out all the words she'd been bottling up since she watched from the audience as Mike was handed his diploma at graduation.

“El you know that's not true.”

“How come you haven't said anything to me then?” The blood pumping faster in her veins giving her an added courage, “I've been scared out of my mind that once fall comes you're just going to break up with me and leave because you never say anything about what's going to happen when you leave for school.”

“That's because I'm scared to say anything.” A silence took over the woods, the only noises were that of birds rustling in their nests above them.

El wiped a stray tear from her cheek as she considered what to say next, “What would you be scared of? You're the one leaving, not me.”

“I'm scared because I'm going to miss you. I don't want to spend the next four years barely ever seeing you. I'm just as scared that you're gonna want to give up on me.”

“Mike, I'd never.”

“It's not just that,” Mike took a deep breath before continuing, the idea that had been swimming around his mind for months but he never had the courage to share suddenly pleading to come out, “I, uh, I have an idea, but I'm scared of what you're going to say to it.”

El raised her eyebrows and Mike continued, his face beginning to flush, “Well I don't even know if you'd *want to*, and even if you do, we'd still have to talk to our parents about it and stuff, but, um, what if you came with me? You're gonna have your GED in a couple weeks, and you were just planning to stay in Hawkins next year anyway. We could get an apartment together, and you could apply for spring semester at some nearby schools.”

Mike's eyes met El's, and he watched as her expression lit up.

“You can go to college too, and we can stay together while we're at school.”

El beamed up at Mike, “We can live together.”

“We can live together,” He repeated.

The two continued lying there for a few seconds in silence, before El leaned in to plant a swift kiss on Mike's cheek, and suddenly all those fears that they harbored the last few weeks felt so useless.

There was still a lot they needed to figure out. They still didn't have a clear plan for the future, or know exactly what they would do or what would happen.

But Mike and El knew one thing. They knew that no matter what else happened, they were both committed to each other. No matter what happened in the fall, they were sticking together.

And that's what really mattered.